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Written statement* submitted by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Social Exclusion of Older Persons Exasperates Poverty a Risk Factor for Elder Abuse

The report of the Independent Expert to the 39th Session of the HRC exposes the harmful direct and indirect impact of social exclusion violating of the human rights of older persons. The consequences of social exclusion multiplies social and economic disadvantages such as poverty in the "absence of a comprehensive universal instrument to promote and protect their human rights" and heightens the risk of violence, abuse and neglect older persons experience.

As noted by Tova Band Winterstein, "Being old" often involves being subject to biases, stigma, and discrimination (or simply: ageism). However, many older persons have "multiple disadvantages" that exacerbate this experience, particularly from a life-long perspective. For example, women "reach" old age after years of being exposed to sexism and paying the price of gender-based exclusionary social structures. In other words, the multiple marginalization of older adults is a consequence of a socially constructed process including ageism, various social and health-related disadvantages, and a lack of balance between needs and rights within these elements.

Such issues are expressed by intersectionality within and between, older adult immigrants, diverse sexual orientations people with disability, poor adults and those who experiencing abuse, There is increased interest in research practice and social policy regarding the experience and needs of these populations , along with "selective inattention" given to groups of older adults experiencing multiple forms of spiraling marginalization, alienation and exclusion, which further exacerbate inequality.

Growing evidence from gender, disability and race studies has provided support for the understanding that the subjective experiences of people with "multiple" social "disadvantages" cannot simply be conceptualized in isolation and as the "sum" of the individual aspects. It has recently been proposed to conceptualize this phenomena of multiple social disadvantages as "intersectionality", a unique human experience which goes beyond the mere "adding on" process of the individual elements that comprise one's group identity. This calls for mutual learning involving what may seem like separate disciplinary fields. Thus, intersectionality acknowledges the diversity of interests, experiences, and needs that exists among the older population as a distinct social group, within time, place and culture.

The Sustainable Development Goal's promise to leave no one behind. SD Goal 1 strives to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere". The language within the targets of SDG 1 includes "all people everywhere" (Target 1.1), people of "all ages (Target 1.2), "all men and women" (1.4), and yet, as noted by the IE as in numerous other S D Goals, it fails to provide specific protections for older persons.

Kylee Jacoby and Erica Sanders, interns in the Gray Panthers Network researched the scant attention to poverty and abuse. The study "Risk Factors for Reported Elder Abuse and Neglect: A Nine-Year Observational Cohort Study", found that "age, race, poverty, functional disability, and cognitive impairment were identified as risk factors for reported elder mistreatment. The onset of new cognitive impairment was associated with elder abuse and neglect." And found that "among sociodemographic features, non-White race, low income, and advanced age at interval inception were significantly associated with experiencing reported elder abuse and neglect," (Lachs, et al. 472). The lack of specific action strategies toward the Sustainable Development Goal 1 for the elderly community, in particular for those within that community who are non-white and women, generates elder abuse.

Poverty also results in elder abuse through the low wages of care workers. An article from The Atlantic discusses the difficult situation many home care workers face. The reality that "on average, home care aides work 34 hours a week, and make an average of $17,000 a year" and that "one in four live in households below the federal poverty line..." highlight the difficulties and struggles of home care workers (Semuels). The low pay of home care workers mixed with lack of supervision can "lead to preventable injuries and death" (Gorman). This is one of the ways poverty can be a risk of elder abuse.

According to John Wasik's article in Forbes Magazine, "4 Risk Factors For Elder Financial Abuse", they are poor physical health, cognitive impairment, difficulty in activities of daily living, and social isolation. Older persons who are in poor physical health are not putting focus on financial matters. They need the care regardless. Concerning cognitive impairment, when the ability to read a bank statement or balance checkbooks declines, financial literacy declines and are not trying to improve their economic state. In one's everyday life, if an older person has difficulty feeding, bathing, or shopping for themselves, management of their money is is in peril. Lastly, social isolation is a key factor. Older persons are often scammed into financial problems. Without a network of peers experiencing the same issues, the probability of being scammed becomes exponentially higher.

Essentially without the financial resources to maintain or provide quality care, elder persons are at risk. Caregivers sometimes they experience economic difficulties and are forced to resign from jobs and take care of older relatives,

which can result in resentment due to a loss of income. In terms of older persons, those who have fewer financial resources are at risk of neglect due to the inefficiency to pay for quality care.

The Australian literature review, "Elder Abuse in Context of Poverty and Deprivation and Emergency Department Care", found that "there is no doubt that elder abuse results in poverty," (Day 171). In studying care and elder abuse, they found that the economic distress patients are put in is often deliberate. Therefore, "education on appropriate language... is needed if victims of elder abuse are to be provided with the opportunity to discuss their situation on presentation to EDs," (Day 175). This education in language, which would give more agency to older persons experiencing elder abuse, will hopefully help "break the cycle of deprivation, poverty and abuse," (Day 175).

A HelpAge India study found that "income insecurity among older women is a leading cause of vulnerability and abuse". When a household is financially insecure, it becomes more common for neglect toward older members of the family to arise. This study enhances the argument that abuse is more common in older persons experiencing poverty.

In the developing nation of Nepal, Krishna M. Gautam, Geriatric Center in Kathmandu, wrote a status report on older persons in Nepal on both nutrition and social status, and which focused on specific research needs. Within the report he states that the majority of older persons are subsistent and living under the poverty line. He writes, "They suffer from deprivation, illiteracy, poor health and nutrition, low social status, discrimination and restriction on mobility" (9). Unfortunately because of this poverty, people enter old age in poor health and without the necessary financial means to live a quality life. Older persons cannot find the means to fulfill their basic needs like food, clothing, housing, and even water that is safe to drink.

A Center for Studies on Aging Report on aging in Arab countries, focuses on how poverty characterizes the majority of older persons, especially in developing Arab countries "where safety nets, social protection systems and pension plans are lacking or minimal" (6). In Morocco two national studies on families showed the vulnerability of older people: "high levels of poverty and illiteracy rates, lack of social protection and high rates of co-morbidity" (11). After the studies were examined, a national strategy was implemented in October 2009 focused on four main themes: "income, health, housing and dignity" (11).

This lack of clear action strategies toward eradicating poverty among older persons as elaborated upon in the Independent Expert's Report, coupled with the weakness she identified in the New Urban Agenda, are risk factors for elder abuse and highlights that dedicated human rights standards in a binding international instrument is essential if the rights of older persons to live lives of dignity are to be realized.

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